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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000280

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)  
SUBJECT: FBI WORKS TO HELP CORRECT FLAWS IN BANGLADESH  
MUTINY INVESTIGATION

REF: A. DHAKA 260  
[1](#)B. DHAKA 255  
[1](#)C. DHAKA 254

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador Moriarty and the head of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation team helping Bangladesh investigate its border guard mutiny urged the minister in charge to strengthen the probe. PolEcon Counselor reiterated the message to two senior Cabinet officials with responsibility for security. By 3/21, police had acted upon suggestions to strengthen the investigation's central command post. Media reports that the investigation could last three more months indicated police were heeding the other major USG suggestion -- to focus on interviewing the thousands of potential witnesses to the mutiny. We also urged the government to ensure that police and military investigators shared their findings with one another; failure to cooperate with one another could tarnish the case.

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URGING A BETTER INVESTIGATION  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador and the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) team helping Bangladesh investigate its border guard mutiny met Commerce Minister Faruq Khan, who is in charge of coordinating the probe, on March 19. The FBI official, New Delhi-based Legal Attache Daniel Powers, told the minister that interviewing thousands of witnesses to the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny was key to determining who was responsible for the massacre of more than 70 people, most of them army officers who commanded the border guards. Powers said the police had conducted only about 100 interviews in the three weeks since the two-day mutiny. The minister acknowledged only 15 police teams were investigating the case. He added that the new Director General of the BDR had distributed a questionnaire to about 7,000 people who may have pertinent information; he said the police would analyze the results and act upon them.

[1](#)3. (C) Powers also stressed the importance of maintaining a central command post to which all investigating agencies would report. He said representatives from those agencies should meet twice daily to review progress in the investigation and to plot their next steps. The minister acknowledged that interagency cooperation could be better and that meetings could be more frequent. He responded positively to the suggestions of increased witness interviews, an effective central command post and strengthened interagency cooperation. PolEcon Counselor later stressed these points in

telephone conversations with the State Minister of Home Affairs and with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's senior security adviser, both of whom said they would act immediately on the advice.

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SOME SIGNS OF POSITIVE CHANGE...  
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¶4. (C) The FBI team reported on 3/21 the investigation command post had been beefed up with computers, copiers and other equipment essential to an efficient investigation. The Police Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is leading the official probe, told the FBI the command post would be in operation 20 hours per day and the switchboard would be open around-the-clock. Meanwhile, local media on 3/21 quoted an unnamed senior police source as saying the investigation could take up to three months to deal with thousands of witnesses, indicating plans were going ahead to vastly increase the number of interviews.

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...BUT SOME TROUBLING SIGNS AS WELL  
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¶5. (C) At least some senior government officials continue to allege an outside conspiracy behind the mutiny despite a lack of evidence to support such a claim. These allegations pressure investigators to reach conclusions the evidence may ultimately not support. Commerce Minister Khan told the Ambassador that the mutiny "was not only a BDR matter," suggesting others were involved. Two days earlier, the State

DHAKA 00000280 002.2 OF 002

Minister for Foreign Affairs told PolOff evidence suggested involvement of the domestic terrorist group Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB). Khan concluded his meeting with the Ambassador by stressing the importance of determining the existence of any international links. Meanwhile, local media on 3/21 quoted unnamed CID sources as saying the FBI believed the mutiny was a conspiracy. (Note: The FBI team does not believe any evidence obtained to date indicates involvement of an outside force. The FBI also reported that CID did not believe outside forces were involved. The FBI has not spoken to the media. End note.)

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CONCLUSION: KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON FOR A CLEAN PROBE  
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¶6. (C) The Ambassador's meeting with Commerce Minister Khan and continuing dialogue between the FBI and its Bangladeshi police counterparts clearly have led to important improvements in the conduct of the mutiny probe. Once the FBI team leaves Bangladesh the USG will still need to constantly remind the Government of Bangladesh of the importance of having an apolitical, professional investigation. Specifically, we will continue to urge Bangladeshi officials to conduct an investigation that follows the evidence, whether it leads to an outside conspiracy or not. Second, we will remind the Government of Bangladesh the investigation will be credible only if it is thorough and not derailed by pressure for swift justice. The mutiny already has shaken the young government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina; an incomplete or biased investigation undoubtedly could do further damage and destabilize this predominantly Muslim country of 150 million people.  
MORIARTY